Why the Crusades WERE Justified

**Noble Purpose of Crusades:**

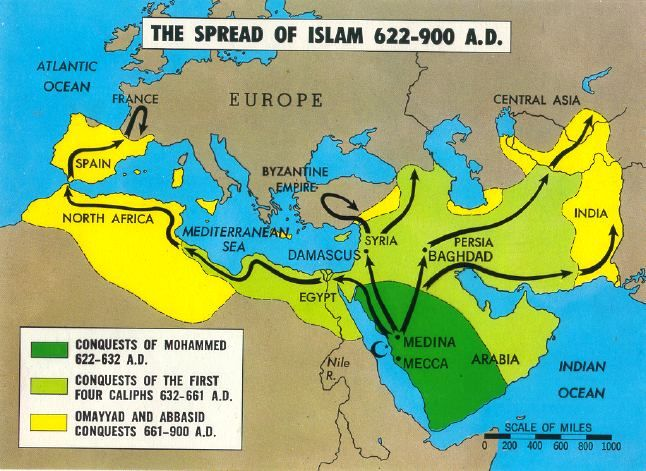
* They wished to liberate the Christian captives from oppression by Muslims.
* Further, they desired to restore Christian access to the holy sites around Jerusalem.

**Threat of Muslim Expansion:**

The Crusades can only properly be understood in terms of the 500 years of Muslim advance into the West that preceded them. Muhammad was [born in](http://www.domain-cloud.info/) A.D. 570 Mecca in present-day Saudi, Arabia. In 630 he led an army of 30,000 to conquer Mecca. By 711 Muslims took Syria, Iraq, Egypt and Jerusalem. By 732 they had invaded Spain and were turned back at Tours, France by Charles Martel. In 846 they attacked outlying areas of Rome. By the end of the 9th century Muslim pirates had established havens all along the Mediterranean coast, threatening commerce, communication, and pilgrim traffic for the next century. They controlled some 2/3 of Christendom. As a result, many Christians and Jews were enduring persecution at Muslim hands.

The Crusades were in essence a defensive action against the spread of Islam by the sword. They were undertaken largely out of concern for fellow Christians in the East. In fact, many great saints supported the Crusades, including Bernard of Clairvaux, Thomas Aquinas, and peace-loving Francis of Assisi. Troops prayed and fasted before battles and praised God after them. Even many Muslim respected the ideals of the Crusaders.

Early map of how Islam spread across North Africa and into Europe by 900 AD



**Aiding their Ally:**

Relations between the Byzantine and Roman Catholic Empires were beginning to become better - Urban II had lifted the excommunication in 1088. The [Byzantine Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Byzantine_Empire) had lost much of its territory in [Asia Minor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asia_Minor) to the [Seljuk Turks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seljuk_Turks) in the aftermath of the [Battle of Manzikert](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Manzikert) in 1071, and Alexius hoped western knights could help him restore it. At a Council of Piacenza, the Byzantine ambassadors' plea asked Pope Urban 2 for help. Previously, the Byzantine Emperor Gregory VII had also called twice for one, but to no avail.

Map of territory Seljuk Turks took from Byzantine Empire in 1071



**Protecting Pilgrims:**

Christians in Egypt and the Holy Land under Muslim Fatimid control were treated with some religious freedoms and tolerance. They were politically marginalized, but were free to practice their faith. It was popular during the Middle Ages for Christians to make pilgrimages to the Holy Land - especially to the city of Jerusalem. People believed that they could be forgiven for their sins if they made such a journey. In 1065, however, Jerusalem was taken over by the Seljuk Turks who were a prominent Tartar tribe who Christians believed to be zealous followers of Islam. Part of Urban II’s call to help the Byzantines was in fact to rescue Jerusalem from the hands of the Muslims who he believed were persecuting Christian pilgrims.

Quote from Pope Urban II at Council of Clermont calling for first crusade

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| "Although, O sons of God, you have promised more firmly than ever to keep the peace among yourselves and to preserve the rights of the church, there remains still an important work for you to do. Freshly quickened by the divine correction, you must apply the strength of your righteousness to another matter which concerns you as well as God. For your brethren who live in the east are in urgent need of your help, and you must hasten to give them the aid which has often been promised them. For, as the most of you have heard, the Turks and Arabs have attacked them and have conquered the territory of Romania [the Greek empire] as far west as the shore of the Mediterranean and the Hellespont, which is called the Arm of St. George. They have occupied more and more of the lands of those Christians, and have overcome them in seven battles. They have killed and captured many, and have destroyed the churches and devastated the empire. If you permit them to continue thus for awhile with impurity, the faithful of God will be much more widely attacked by them. On this account I, or rather the Lord, beseech you as Christ's heralds to publish this everywhere and to persuade all people of whatever rank, foot-soldiers and knights, poor and rich, to carry aid promptly to those Christians and to destroy that vile race from the lands of our friends. I say this to those who are present, it meant also for those who are absent. Moreover, Christ commands it.” |

FALSE CLAIM - The Crusaders did it for the wealth

This charge is contrary to the facts of history. Most Crusaders undertook the 2000 mile trek at great sacrifice of their own wealth. Many sold or mortgaged their own homes, most of which were not recouped. Most never occupied the land they gained from the Muslims. They went out with a sense of duty to God.

**Positive Results of Crusades:**

Political

* The Crusades helped end feudalism in Western Europe and brought about the conditions that helped create the Renaissance. The Crusades began the breakdown of feudal society in Western Europe. Many feudal lords went off to fight and die in the crusades, leaving their serfs free to go to towns and start new lives. Monarchs gained new strength when knights left to fight in the crusades in the Middle East. This increase in the power of the monarch also helped to end feudalism. A break down of the rigid feudal structure will be new growth of opportunity for middle class
* Growth of a sense of national pride - people no longer looked to regional lords as strengths but to monarchs - thus giving rise to the modern countries of England, France, Spain, etc.

Ecomic

* Significant increase in demand for luxury items from Southwest and South Asia - especially spices like cinnamon and pepper. They created a constant demand for the transportation of men and supplies, encouraged ship-building, and extended the market for eastern wares in Europe. The products of Damascus, Mosul, Alexandria, Cairo, and other great cities were carried across the Mediterranean to the Italian seaports, where they found their way into all European lands. The elegance of the Orient, with its silks, tapestries, precious stones, perfumes, spices, pearls, and ivory, was so enchanting that an enthusiastic crusader called it "the vestibule of Paradise."
* World exploration will rise due to this increased interest in spices - the incentives given to geographical discoveries led various travellors like Marco Polo to explore remote countries of Asia. Eventually this new drive for sea trade and adventure will lead to the rise of 15th century explorers like Columbus, Vasco de Gama and Magellan.

Intellectual Changes (Cultural Diffusion)

**The influence of the Crusades upon the intellectual development of Europe can hardly be overestimated. Above all, they liberalized the minds of the crusaders. The East at the time of the Middle Ages surpassed the West in civilization. The crusaders enjoyed the advantages which come from travel in strange lands and among unfamiliar peoples. They went out from their castles or villages to see great cities, marble palaces, superb dresses, and elegant manners; they returned with finer tastes, broader ideas, and wider sympathies. The crusades opened up a new world. Furthermore, the knowledge of the science and learning of the East gained by the crusaders through their expeditions, greatly stimulated the Latin intellect, and helped to awaken in Western Europe that mental activity which resulted finally in the great intellectual outburst known as the Revival of Learning and the period of the Renaissance.**